



#26

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THE AMAZING

SPIDER-MAN

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY



MACKIE
ROMITA JR
HANNA

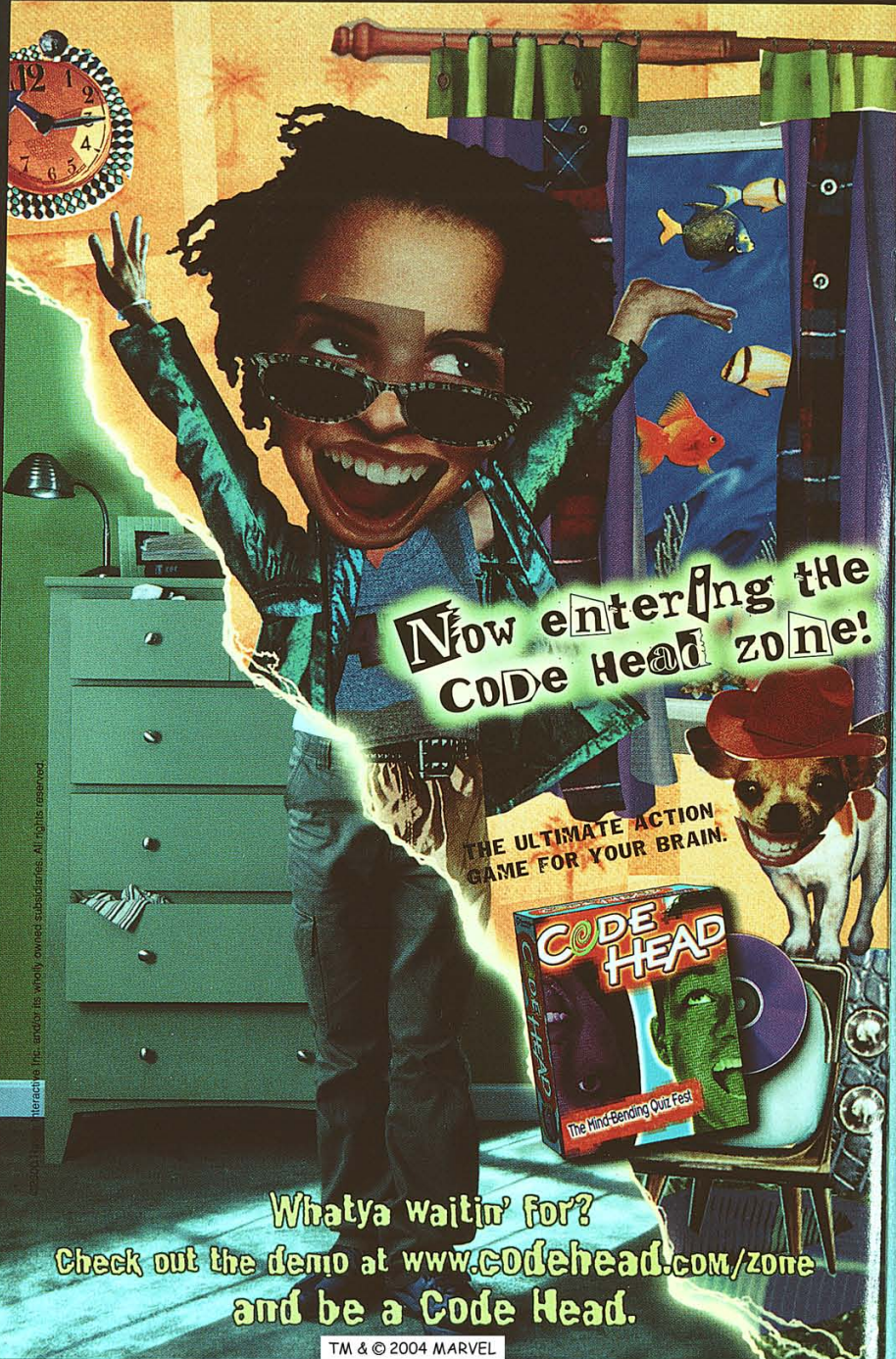
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THE M A S K

YOU EVER LOOK
IN THE MIRROR...

...AND WONDER WHO
IT IS THAT IS STARING
BACK AT YOU?

I'VE BEEN DOING
THAT A LOT LATELY.

AT A DEMONSTRATION ON
RADIATION, HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENT PETER PARKER WAS BITTEN BY
AN IRRADIATED SPIDER FROM WHICH HE
GAINED THE ARACHNID'S INCREDIBLE
ABILITIES. WHEN A BURGLAR KILLED HIS
BELOVED UNCLE BEN, A GRIEF-STRIKEN PETER
VOWED TO USE HIS GREAT POWERS IN THE
SERVICE OF HIS FELLOW MAN, BECAUSE HE
LEARNED AN INVALUABLE LESSON: WITH GREAT
POWER MUST ALSO COME GREAT RESPONSIBILITY.
STAN LEE PRESENTS:
THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN!

HOWARD MACKIE
JOHN ROMITA JR.
SCOTT HANNA
STORY AND ART
GREGORY WRIGHT COLORS
RICHARD STARKINGS &
COMICRAFT'S TROY PETERI
LETTERS
LARA CASTLE
ASSISTANT EDITOR
RALPH MACCHIO EDITOR
JOE QUESADA
EDITOR IN CHIEF

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UNDERNEATH THIS MASK MY NAME IS PETER PARKER.

IN THE COSTUME I'M IN I GO BY THE NAME SPIDER-MAN.

THE WHOLE THING... COSTUMED IDENTITY... SUPER-VILLAINS... SAVING THE WORLD... SEEMS SO RIDICULOUS.

LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF A COMIC BOOK.

BUT IT IS WHAT PASSES FOR MY REAL LIFE.

NORMAN OSBORN, THE GREEN GOBLIN, IS MY ARCH-NEMESIS. HOW OFTEN DO YOU GET TO USE THAT TERM IN A SENTENCE?

THIS IS HIS MASK I'M HOLDING IN MY HAND.

WELL... I THINK IT IS.

YOU SEE NORMAN IS THE KIND OF SUPER-VILLAIN WHO NOT ONLY WANTS TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD, BUT WANTS TO MAKE SURE HE SCREWS UP MY LIFE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE WHILE DOING IT.

CAN'T TELL YOU HOW MANY TIMES I'VE WATCHED THAT GUY DIE.

SOMEHOW... HE ALWAYS COMES BACK TO MAKE MY LIFE A LIVING HELL.

THIS TIME AROUND... LAST WEEK IN REAL TIME... HE WAS WORKING ON THIS WHOLE DRUGGING SLASH MIND-CONTROL THING.

HAD ME MASQUERADING AS THE GREEN GOBLIN WITHOUT MY KNOWING ABOUT IT.

I DID A LOT OF STUFF I'M NOT PROUD OF. PUT A REAL SCARE TO A LOT OF PEOPLE I CARE ABOUT.

THIS WAS ALL PART OF SOME CRAZY RIGHT-OUT-OF-STAR WARS IDEA NORMAN HAD ABOUT BRINGING ME OVER TO THE "DARK SIDE"... TURNING ME INTO HIS HEIR APPARENT.

THING IS, EVEN WITH MY HAVING BEATEN NORMAN AGAIN...

...IT'S HAD ME TURNED INSIDE OUT EVER SINCE.

HE TOUCHED ON A REAL TENDER SPOT OF MINE.

I NEVER REALLY KNEW MY REAL MOM AND DAD.

THEY WERE KILLED IN A PLANE CRASH WHEN I WAS JUST A KID.

GROWING UP, I COULDN'T ACCEPT THAT THEY COULD REALLY BE DEAD.

HOW COULD THEY BE?

HOW COULD I KNOW WHO I WAS IF I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE I CAME FROM?

MY MEMORIES OF THEM ARE STILL SO FUZZY.

ESPECIALLY MY DAD.

I DON'T REALLY KNOW IF I REMEMBER HIM AT ALL OR IF I'M JUST REMEMBERING THE STORIES AUNT MAY TOLD ME NIGHT AFTER NIGHT.

AFTER ALL THAT HAPPENED WITH NORMAN...

...AFTER ALL THE QUESTIONS HE RAISED...

...I'VE GOT TO KNOW.

I'VE GOT TO KNOW WHERE I CAME FROM.

MANHATTAN'S UPPER WEST SIDE...

COLUMBUS CIRCLE

EVEN WITH THE CURRENT DEVELOPMENT TRENDS, THERE ARE STILL SOME SLICES OF WHAT USED TO BE REAL NEIGHBORHOODS LEFT IN THE CITY.

THIS IS ONE OF THEM.

OLD MAN FRENZETTI OPENED HIS CIGAR SHOP IN A TIME BEFORE CIGARS WERE THE "IN" THING.

BEFORE SUPER-MODELS POSED ON GLOSSY MAGAZINE COVERS WITH CIGARS SMUGGLED IN FROM CUBA STUCK BETWEEN THEIR COLLAGEN-FILLED LIPS.

HE'S HAD HIS FAIR SHARE OF FAMOUS PEOPLE PASS THROUGH HIS DOORS... NICK FURY, THE THING, THAT SHORT HAIRY GUY FROM CANADA.

BUT TIMES ARE CHANGING.

AND FRENZETTI IS FILLING IT LIKE HIS TIME IS COMING TO AN END.

LOOK AT THIS? THIS AIN'T NO NEIGHBORHOOD NO MORE.

ALMOST NONE OF US OLD TIMERS LEFT.

EVERYTHING'S STARBUCKS AND GUCCI. HARDLY ANY NATIVE NEW YORKERS LEFT ALIVE.

JUST A BUNCH OF FARM-FED REDNECKS WHO WANT A FANCY ADDRESS SO THEY CAN PRETEND THEIR DADDIES DON'T HAVE A BARBED WIRE COLLECTION BACK HOME IN NEBRASKA.

PHEH --! WHAT THE --? PEOPLE DON'T EVEN CLEAN UP AFTER THEIR MUTTS ANYMORE. THERE OUGHTTA BE A --

AND THE NEW BREED OF CRIMINAL...? IN THE OLD DAYS YOU DEALT WITH A BETTER CLASS, MEN OF HONOR. IT WAS THE COST OF DOING BUSINESS AND YOU KNEW IT.

NOW?

HEY? WHAT IS THIS?

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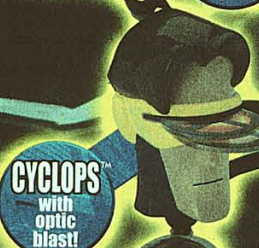


MYSTIQUE with morphing face!

STORM with sparking eyes!



CYCLOPS with optic blast!



TOAD with darting tongue!



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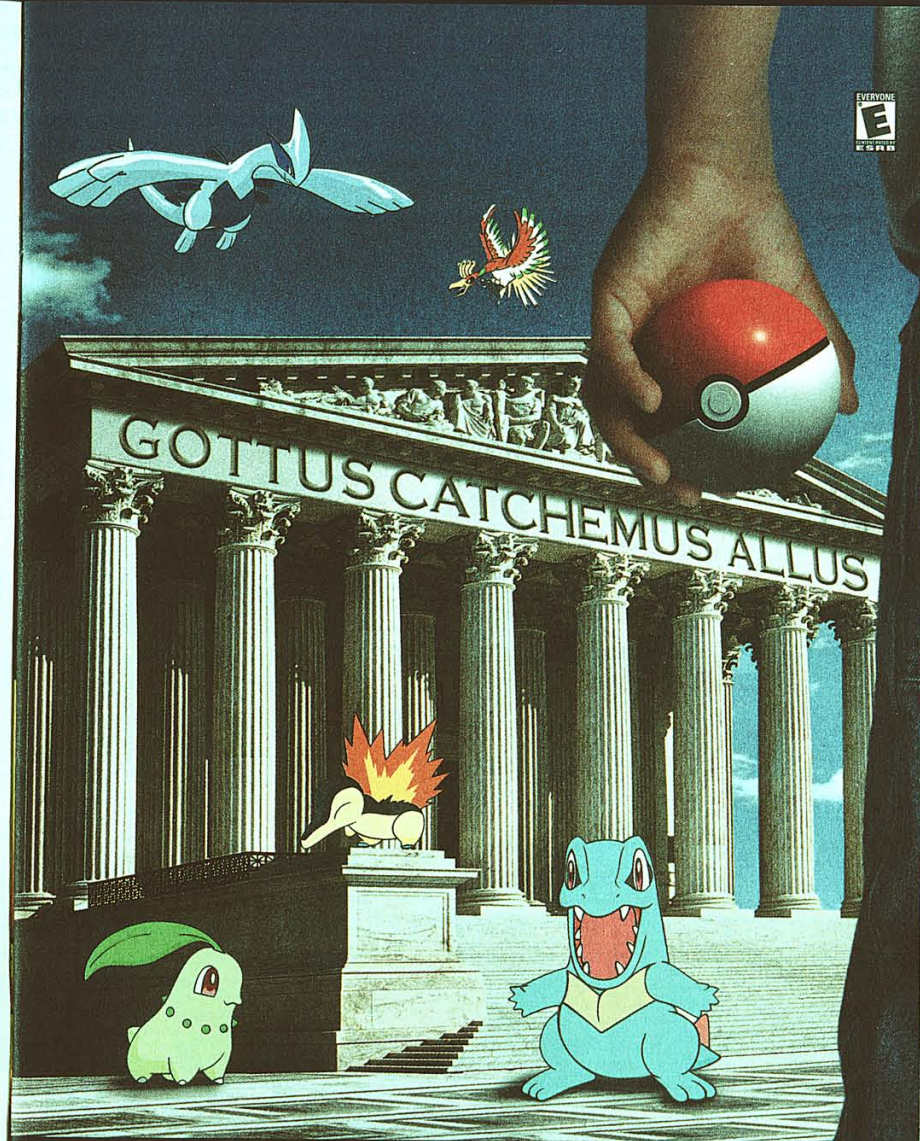
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THE NEXT DAY IN
FOREST HILLS,
QUEENS...

OH, MY!
LOOK HOW IT'S
FADED.

OH, THE
YEARS HAVE
JUST FLOWN BY,
PETER.

I REMEMBER
TAKING THIS
PICTURE OF THE
BOYS LIKE IT WAS
YESTERDAY.

DAD DOESN'T LOOK
TOO HAPPY TO BE
HAVING HIS PICTURE
TAKEN, AUNT
MAY.

NEVER WAS MUCH
OF A PREENER, THAT
FATHER OF YOURS.
WAS ALWAYS
UNCOMFORTABLE
AROUND THE
CAMERA.

BUT HE DID IDOLIZE
HIS BIG BROTHER
BEN, THOUGH. THIS
PICTURE WAS TAKEN
JUST A COUPLE OF
YEARS BEFORE YOUR
FATHER AND HIS
BUDDY, "BIG" MIKE
CALLAHAN, ENTERED THE
SERVICE.

THEY WERE UNDERAGE,
HAD TO LIE TO GET IN,
BUT THAT WAS YOUR
FATHER... A REAL
HELLRAISER.

I REMEMBER
HOW WORRIED
BEN WAS ABOUT
HIM.

PETER, DEAR, CAN
I ASK WHY THE
SUDDEN INTEREST
IN YOUR DAD?

I WAS JUST REALIZING THAT I DON'T REALLY
REMEMBER HIM ALL THAT MUCH. I WASN'T
MUCH MORE THAN A BABY WHEN HE AND MOM
LEFT. I HAVE A PRETTY GOOD PICTURE OF
MY MOM IN MY MIND, BUT DAD...

...IT'S LIKE
THE MEMORY IS
FADING... JUST
LIKE THE
PICTURE.

CAN YOU
TELL ME MORE,
AUNT MAY? I
FEEL LIKE I
NEED TO KNOW
HIM.

OF COURSE, DEAR.
I'LL TELL YOU ALL I
CAN REMEMBER.

AT MY
AGE IT'S SOMETIMES
EASIER TO REMEMBER
EVENTS OF THIRTY OR
FORTY YEARS AGO THAN
IT IS YESTERDAY.

YOU KNOW
YOUR DAD WAS THE
SMART ONE IN THE
FAMILY, BUT HE ALSO
HAD A HEART OF GOLD.
I THINK BEN LOOKED
UP TO HIS LITTLE
BROTHER AS MUCH
AS YOUR DAD DID
TO BEN...

LATER THAT
NIGHT...

BOY! I
NEVER HEARD
EVEN HALF OF
THOSE STORIES
ABOUT MY DAD
BEFORE.

MAKES ME
REALIZE I REALLY
NEVER DID KNOW
HIM.

NOT AS
ANYTHING
MORE THAN A
CHARACTER
FROM THE
OLD FAMILY
STORIES.

NOT AS
A MAN.

GOT
TO CHANGE
THAT.



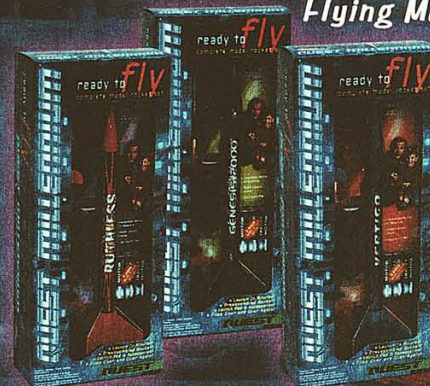
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HEY, DAD! I JUST REMEMBERED SOMETHING ELSE ABOUT WHEN THE GOBLIN ATTACKED ME. YOU WANNA HEAR?

SURE, SON. I'LL BE RIGHT THERE.



YOU KNOW, PETER, IF YOU WANT TO LEARN ABOUT YOUR DAD... YOUR AUNT AND SOME OLD PHOTOS AREN'T GOING TO GIVE YOU THE REAL STORY.

YOU GOT TO FIND SOMEONE WHO REALLY KNEW HIM. AN OLD BUDDY OR SOMETHING.



AN OLD BUDDY?



AUNT MAY? IT'S PETER.

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT MY DAD'S OLD FRIEND BIG MIKE.

YOU HAVE ANY IDEA OF HOW TO REACH HIM THESE DAYS?



A SHORT TIME LATER...

THIS IS IT... MY DAD'S OLD STOMPING GROUNDS.

AUNT MAY SAID SHE HADN'T HEARD FROM MIKE CALLAHAN IN YEARS, BUT THAT SHE KNEW HE HAD OPENED THIS BAR.



THIS PLACE... THIS STREET... LOOKS PRETTY EMPTY FOR MANHATTAN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY.



WONDER WHAT'S UP WITH THAT?

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I'M GUESSING THAT WOULD BE BIG MIKE

WHAT ARE YOU DOING, BOY? THIS IS CRAZY!

IT'S GOT TO STOP NOW!



THEY'RE ALL FRIENDS OF MINE AND I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU --

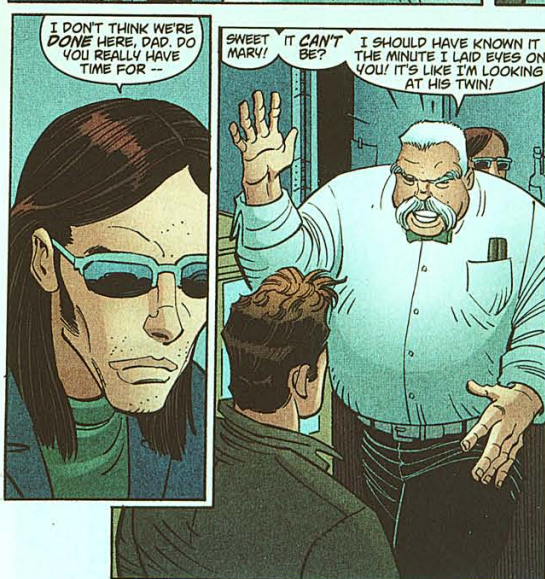
CAN I HELP YOU?



I THINK SO. ARE YOU MR. CALLAHAN?

UH-HUH. DO I KNOW YOU?

NO, SIR, BUT I THINK YOU KNEW MY FATHER AND I --



I DON'T THINK WE'RE DONE HERE, DAD. DO YOU REALLY HAVE TIME FOR --

SWEET MARY! IT CAN'T BE?

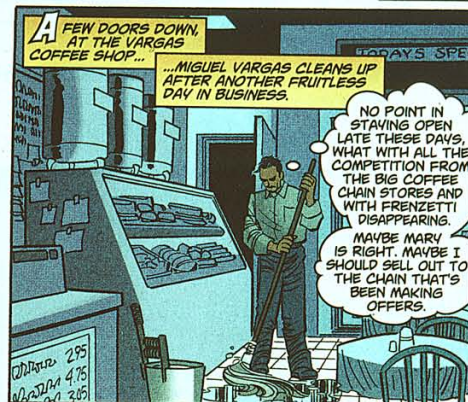
I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN IT THE MINUTE I LAID EYES ON YOU! IT'S LIKE I'M LOOKING AT HIS TWIN!



RICH PARKER'S KID!

GEEZ! I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU SINCE YOU WERE IN DIAPERS, KID!

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BULLPEN BULLETINS

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ON SALE NEXT WEEK

CAPTAIN AMERICA #38

The Super Soldier is determined to settle his feud with Protoclade—even if he has to launch a one-man invasion of A.I.M.'s HQ! By Dan Jurgens!

CAPTAIN MARVEL #11

The Psycho-Man has conquered the Microverse. Next stop: Earth! By Peter David & Chriscross!

FANTASTIC FOUR: TWGCM #1

The House celebrates the FF's 40th Anniversary with a year-long, action-packed adventure! By Erik Larsen & a cavalcade of creators!

HULK/SENTRY

The Hulk has been smart, savage and everything in between. But did you know that he was also once a sidekick? By Paul Jenkins & Bill Sienkiewicz!

INCREDIBLE HULK #23

What does the Chicago mob want with Mr. Fixit? And how does it connect to the embarrassing secret of Nobby Stiles? By Paul Jenkins & Kyle Hotz!

IRON FIST/WOLVERINE #4

Will Danny Rand make the final sacrifice to save Tokyo? And if so, will Logan kick the spot out of Junzo Muto? By Jay Faerber & Jamal Igle!

KILLRAVEN

Journey to the year 2020 and witness the return of the fighting-mad Martian-mauler, Killraven! By Joe Linsner!

PETER PARKER: SPIDER-MAN #26

Do New York's Finest view Spider-Man as a hero or a menace? Find out in this stand-alone, street level story! By Paul Jenkins & Joe Bennett!

THUNDERBOLTS #47

Songbird and Captain Marvel were an item in AVENGERS FOREVER, but will it be love at first fight? By Fabian Nicieza & Mark Bagley!

ULTIMATE X-MEN #1

Hot on the heels of ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN comes a fresh look at the world's #1 super team! By Mark Millar & Adam Kubert!

UNCANNY X-MEN 2000

Amy Stringer is a mutant in danger—but can Professor X get her to make the right choice? By Scott Lobbell & Essad Ribic!

X-MAN #72

Qabiri wants to "cleanse" our world, but Nate Grey is going to wrap his mop around his head! By Steven Grant & Ariel Olivetti!

X-MEN #109

It's holiday time at the X-Mansion—as the 100-page Monster strikes! By Chris Claremont & Leinil Uf

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SPOTLIGHT

ULTIMATE X-MEN #1

The Year's #1 Book Is Almost Here!

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Think the changes triggered by Joe Q. and Bill J. were limited to our comics? There's a revolution afoot, friends, and it's spread from the printed page to your computer screen.

For five years I worked in Marvel's Direct Sales department, spreading the Marvel message to the world. That meant creating our monthly catalog, ads, P.O.P. items and hooking outside sources (i.e. Diamond, Wizard, CBG, Entertainment Weekly, newspapers, etc.) up with materials for media coverage. In essence I became a funnel for all of the wild art and info flowing through The House. But a quick move to Marvel New Media means I can now cut out the middleman and speak directly with you at marvel.com!

If you haven't checked out our official site lately, you need to surf there pronto. The site's been totally revamped by Steve Milo, Sarah DeSanti, Jeff Youngquist and the entire New Media Machine with an eye on increasing content, easing navigation and decreasing download times. Now you'll find daily updates that take you behind the scenes with the following new features:

- **MARVEL SPOTLIGHT:** What's the coolest book of the week? We'll make our pick... and show you interior pages days before it hits the stands!
- **SNEAK PEEK:** Covers, interior art, character designs... you get to see anything cool we find in the editors' offices!
- **MARVEL BUZZ:** The House makes headlines on all of the comic sites... and we collect the news so you don't have to search all day!
- **SHOWBIZ:** Twice a week ace reporter Rob Alister brings you the latest from all of the Marvel projects currently in production... like *Spider-Man* and *Blade: Bloodhunt*!
- **MARVEL SEARCH ENGINE:** Type in a character's name... we'll deliver a cornucopia of content!
- **COMICS ON SALE:** Each month's offerings... now with more art and better organization!
- **POWER POLL:** Updated to let you speak out on the latest hot topics!
- **CHARACTER HANDBOOK:** Tons of new entries... now synched with key comics!
- **YOUR MAN @ MARVEL:** You wanted more reports from inside The House... and now he delivers every Monday, Wednesday and Friday!

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Bill Rosemann
Online Editorial Manager

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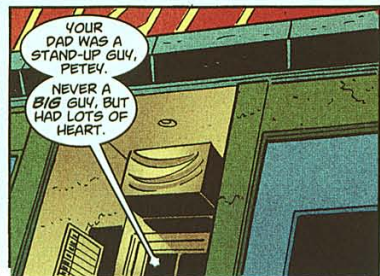
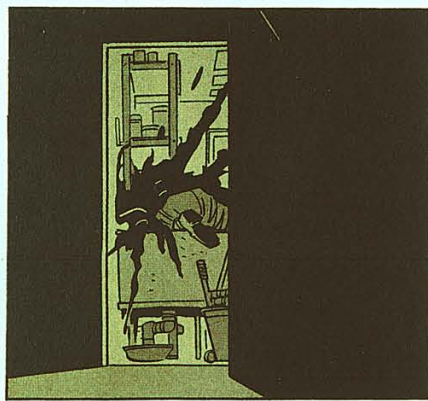
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"YOUR INSTRUCTORS HAVE BEEN MOST HELPFUL. THEIR POSITIVE ENCOURAGEMENT AND TIPS ON IMPROVING MY COMPOSITION HAVE DONE A WORLD OF GOOD."
-VICTOR J. MILLER, SR, USA

"I WAS REALLY (AND I MEAN REALLY!) IMPRESSED AND HAPPY WITH THE QUALITY OF THE COURSES."
-THOMAS DEROUAULT, FRANCE

"THANKS AGAIN... FOR PROVIDING A PERSON SUCH AS MYSELF WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN."
-DANIEL BELIC, AUSTRALIA

"I HAVE LEARNED MORE ABOUT PENCILING IN THIS SHORT TIME-THAN IN THE FIFTEEN YEARS I'VE BEEN TRYING TO BREAK INTO THIS INDUSTRY!"
-SANDY CARRUTHERS, CANADA

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COMING IN THE
YEAR 2000:
3 NEW COURSES!

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YOU WANT TO KNOW THE KIND OF MAN YOUR DAD WAS, KID?

I'LL GIVE YOU A PRIME EXAMPLE. IT GOES BACK MORE YEARS THAN I CAN REMEMBER.

"YOUR DAD AND I, WE WERE ON LEAVE FROM THE SERVICE. CAME BACK TO THE OLD STOMPING GROUNDS TO RAISE A LITTLE HELL, BUT MOSTLY TO RELAX.

"IT WAS NIGHTTIME... REALLY EARLY MORNING. WE'D HAD A PRETTY HEAVY NIGHT OF PARTYING.

"THERE WE WERE... WALKING DOWN THE STREET AND MINDING OUR OWN BUSINESS WHEN WE HEARD AN ARGUMENT TAKING PLACE DOWN IN SOME ALLEY.

"COULDN'T HEAR *WHAT* WAS BEING SAID, BUT YOU COULD TELL THAT THINGS WERE GOING TO COME TO BLOWS.

"YOUR DAD... HE WANTS TO SEE WHAT'S GOING ON. ME... I WANT TO MIND MY OWN BUSINESS AND GO HOME AND GET SOME SLEEP SO WE CAN GET UP AND PARTY THE NEXT NIGHT.

"OF COURSE, AS ALWAYS, WE DID WHAT YOUR DAD SAID.

"WE GET HALFWAY DOWN THE ALLEY, WE CAN HEAR THE ARGUING LOUDER AND LOUDER, AND THEN THE FIRST BLOW.



"THERE WAS THE BIGGEST GUY I EVER SAW GETTING READY TO BEAT THE HECK OUT OF A LITTLE GUY. THIS GUY WAS HUGE, PETE... I KID YOU NOT! BIGGER THAN ME!

"YOUR DAD... HE NEVER COULD STAND A BULLY... SO HE WALKS RIGHT UP AND GETS IN THIS MOUNTAIN'S FACE.

"ASKS HIM TO BACK OFF.

"THE BIG GUY IS PRACTICALLY SNORTING FIRE AT THIS POINT, PETE. HE'S STARING DOWN AT YOUR DAD AND I COULD SWEAR HE'S GOING TO BITE HIS HEAD OFF.

"YOUR DAD JUST SMILES AND ASKS WHAT'S GOING ON. LIKE IT WAS NOTHING.

"THE GUY STARTS RANTING IN YOUR DAD'S FACE. SAYS THE LITTLE GUY IS HIS NO-GOOD ROTTEN SON AND THAT THIS IS NONE OF YOUR DAD'S BUSINESS.

"THEN, BEFORE I CAN DO ANYTHING TO STOP HIM, HE TAKES A SWING AT YOUR DAD.

"AND THEN I WATCHED THE MOST AMAZING THING I EVER SAW.

"YOUR DAD... WHO WAS PRETTY GOOD IN A SCRAP FOR A LITTLE GUY... TAKES THE PUNCH.

"HE WAS HURT, STAGGERED BACK, BUT HE DIDN'T TAKE A SHOT AT THE GUY. YOUR DAD KNEW A THING OR TWO, PETE. I'M SURE HE COULDN'T HAVE TAKEN THE BIG GUY OUT, BUT HE DIDN'T. INSTEAD...

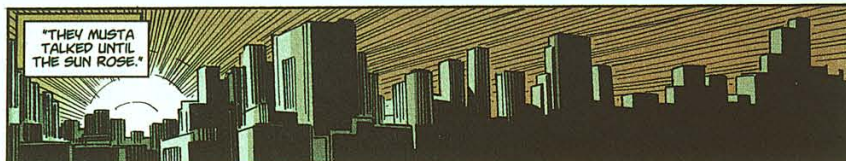
"THE GUY DROPPED HIS HANDS..."

"HE LOOKED UP AT HIM AND ASKED, 'YOU THINK YOUR SON COULDN'T HAVE TAKEN THAT ONE?' HOW WOULD THAT HAVE MADE YOU FEEL? FEEL LIKE TALKING NOW?"

"IT WAS A PRETTY GOOD BLOW, TOO... BUT YOUR DAD JUST SUCKS IT UP.

"I WANTED TO JUMP IN, BUT RICH STOPPED ME WITH A LOOK.





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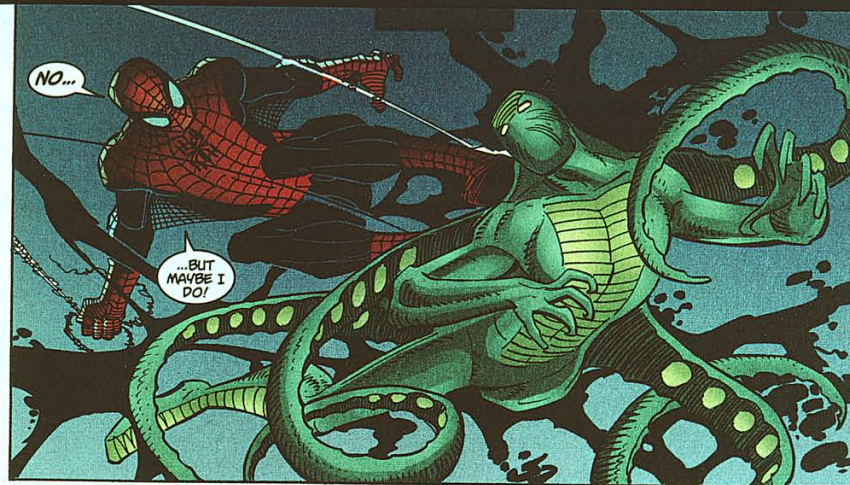
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* See Peter Parker
#16. -- Yeah! Ralf.



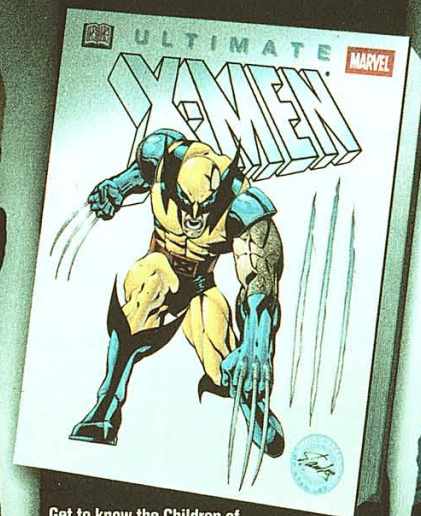
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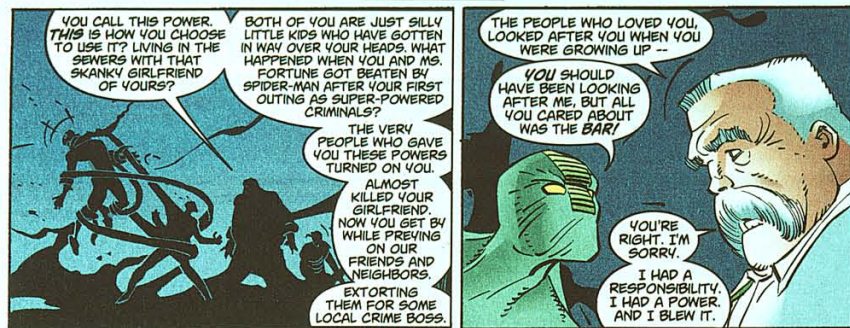
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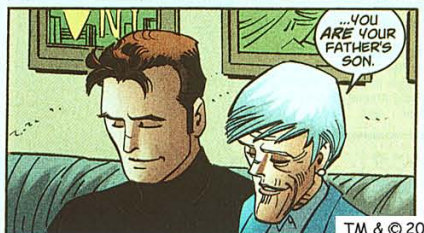
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AND SPIDER-MAN BEGINS TO TALK.

LATE INTO THE NIGHT.

UNTIL THE SUN RISES THE FOLLOWING MORNING.



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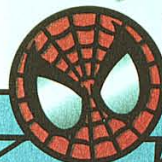
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THE SPIDER-WEB

LARA CASTLE
ASSISTANT EDITOR

RALPH MACCHIO
EDITOR

JOE QUESADA
CHIEF



Dear Spider's Web,

It was very nice seeing Erik Larsen in these pages again. These last three issues had an energy all to themselves, and it's very refreshing. Speaking of refreshing, it was also extremely nice seeing the black costume on Spider-Man again. That was always a favorite of mine, and seeing it on Venom just isn't the same. It was nice to see Spidey in it again.

I was very surprised by the death of Eddie Brock's ex-wife in AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #19. I have to say, I didn't see that one coming at all. I'm not upset in the least, because it was an interesting story point that furthered the plot, and it cleared out some deadwood in the process. That, and it gives Venom a new reason to not like Spider-Man.

As for issues #20 and #21, it's good to see the wrapping up of old subplots. While it's interesting to wonder if J. Jonah Jameson knows who Spider-Man is, it's only fun for so long. It's nice to see this tied up. Also, the Spider-Slayers are back, and it's great to see them drawn by Erik. This has been a great three issues, and I'm looking forward to the Senator Ward story conclusion, and the return of John Romita, Jr!

Daron Jensen
Bourbonnais, IL
daronjensen@hotmail.com

We're pleased that you enjoyed our little walk down memory lane so much, Daron. It was indeed nice to have Mr. Larsen back in these pages, even if it was only for three issues. We'd love to have the man back any time, and since he seems to be doing quite a bit of work for this company at the moment, that time could come pretty darn soon.

Hey, people,

I think I have it. This issue really served as an eye-opener for me on a personal level. I think that I finally see the difference (or perhaps what's missing) in these new Spider-books: Peter's winning. Case in point: he defeats the ultimate (yes, that's sarcasm) Spider-Slayer in one page. Hmm, big deal? In the issue before this one, we got to see his first encounter with a Spider-Slayer, and it took him the whole issue to figure out a way to defeat it. But the Smythes have been improving all their models, right? Guess not, because all Peter has to do is turn around and hit it a few times! Now, I know that it's implied on the next page that Peter was in a titanic struggle with the "Ultimate Slayer," but come on. He has to outwit the others, not outfight them. Bad guys shouldn't be subtle!

So, what's my point, you ask? In earlier issues (and you know the ones I'm talking about), we weren't sure that Peter was going to win. They were as much about him growing up as they were about him saving the day. Now, we only see Peter saving the day. Peter cleans everyone's

clocks now. What's up with that? Did he get dumber since he lost his job at Tricorp? Can't he outwit anyone anymore? And don't try to tell me that realizing the "Ultimate Slayer" was the focal point was outwitting Smythe, 'cause I don't buy it. It was just common sense, plain and simple.

While I'm on the subject of Peter growing up, how about this: Gwen's death shakes him to his core, just like Uncle Ben's, but MJ dies, and he opens a box and he's done with it? He missed the funeral, right? Have we seen him go to her grave at all? It's like she meant nothing to him. One would think that a death like that would be a cornerstone in the Spider-Man universe, but instead, it's barely a subplot. (This can only mean one of two things: you have bad writers, which I doubt, or she's not really dead.) The people around Peter are who make him what he is, but instead, we just see him beating on baddies. Are we doomed to see Peter stay a shadow of his former self? I hope not.

I'm sure you've had enough of my criticism by this point. I even want to tell me to shut up. It's not that the comics are bad, by any means. It's just that they could be better. I think you guys want that, and I'm sure the fans want it. Thanks for listening, and keep up the good work.

Mark Parisi
via the Internet

Thanks for writing, Mark. We'd love to answer your complaints point-by-point but that would get in the way of insulting Ralf down below, so we hope you'll understand. After all, the two things aren't completely disconnected, if you catch our drift.

Dear Spider's Web,

Did I miss something? What exactly did Ralf do to earn such a record of incompetence? I have to admit, the constant wisecracks are starting to get at my funny bone, but I'd still like to be cleared up on the matter. The way I see it, either you guys'll see that you're teasing him for a truly petty reason (which I doubt...), or the next time you slam him, I'll get the full gist of the joke and bust a button laughing. Until then, I'll just sit here reading (and enjoying) my Spidey comics.

Nina Marie
Phoenix, AZ

Some of you may have assumed that, because this is Ralf's final issue of AMAZING SPIDER-MAN, we would dispense with the usual insults, japes and jibes, in favor of something poignant and respectful. Let us assure you, that is not the case.

There seems to be a conventional wisdom shared by the contributors to this page that we are somehow only fooling around, poking fun at a well-liked and well-respected

colleague; that while we may poke fun at personal flaws and foibles, we do it out of an affectionate regard; that the character of "Ralf" is somehow a gross and grotesque exaggeration of reality. Let us assure you, that is not the case.

Many have assumed that we were stretching the truth a bit when we joked that Ralf threatened to exhaust our supply of rare and precious no-prizes; that the multitude of continuity errors and glitches were somehow as easily explained away as we made them seem in our pat, glib responses. Let us assure you, that is not the case.

Certainly we were being hyperbolic when we spoke of Ralf's attendance. Could any professional manage to hold down employment with a track record like that, you may have wondered? Surely we were in jest when we suggested that Ralf's usual method for avoiding the traffic on the George Washington Bridge is to delay coming into work until most people are heading home. Let us assure you, that is not the case.

So just in case there was any room for doubt, in case there was any one reader out there laboring under the misconception that "he couldn't really be that bad, could he?"—we would like to set the record straight once and for all. We do not like Ralf. We do not respect him. And we certainly wouldn't want anyone to be left with the impression that we do.

And just in case you find yourself wondering if this "final insult" is really just one long, grandiose expression of fondness disguised as an insult, a veiled paean of gratitude to an underappreciated colleague by an editorial staff that would sooner take the opportunity to thank and salute him if only they weren't too cynical and emotionally stunted to express the sentiment...

...Let us assure you, unequivocally, that is most definitely not the case.

NEXT ISSUE:

THE BATTLE WITH THE GREEN GOBLIN MAY BE OVER, BUT ITS AFTERMATH HAS LEFT PETER QUESTIONING SPIDER-MAN'S ROLE. PLUS, HOW COULD SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AS RESCUING A KITTEN FROM A TREE LAND SPIDEY IN THE MIST OF AN ALL-OUT A.I.M. ASSAULT? WE DON'T KNOW, BUT WE'RE BETTING THAT HOWARD, JOHN AND SCOTT DO, SO COME ON BACK HERE NEXT MONTH FOR THE ANSWER. ONE THING'S FOR SURE RALF WON'T BE HERE TO MESS IT UP!

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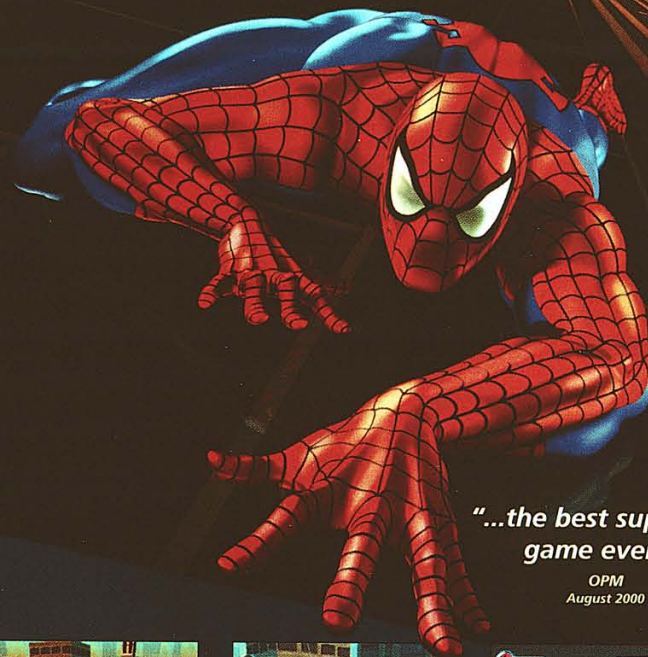
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